



Class LC 113  
Book A2E3

Author \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

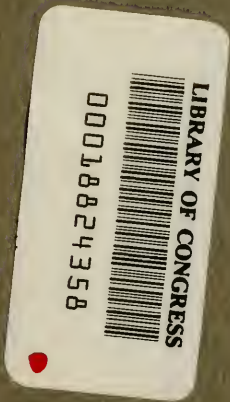
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Imprint \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16-30599-1 GPO





*Shew. Alden*  
*From the Author*

EDUCATION.

DISCOURSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE

Prohibition of Extemporaneous Prayer,

IN THE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OF

ABINGTON, MASS.,

DELIVERED SABBATH, JULY 10th, 1859.

BY

REV. HENRY L. EDWARDS,

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY J. E. FARWELL & CO., 32 CONGRESS STREET.

1859.

43-39020



EDUCATION.

---

DISCOURSE,

OCCASIONED BY THE

Prohibition of Extemporaneous Prayer,

IN THE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OF

ABINGTON, MASS.,

DELIVERED SABBATH, JULY 10th, 1859.

BY

REV. HENRY L. EDWARDS,

---

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY J. E. FARWELL & CO., 32 CONGRESS STREET.

1859.

LC113  
.A2E3

1606 B6  
76 43

SOUTH ABINGTON, July 19, 1859.

DEAR SIR, —

We, the undersigned, believing that the publication of the sermon preached by you last Sabbath P. M., from the words, "Train up a child in the way he should go," would advance the cause of Religion, and tend to promote the prosperity of our Public Schools, would very respectfully solicit a copy for the above named purpose.

Hoping it may seem advisable to you to accede to our request, we remain, Sir,

Very Respectfully, Yours,

JAMES SOULE,

And forty-four others.

To Rev. H. L. EDWARDS.

---

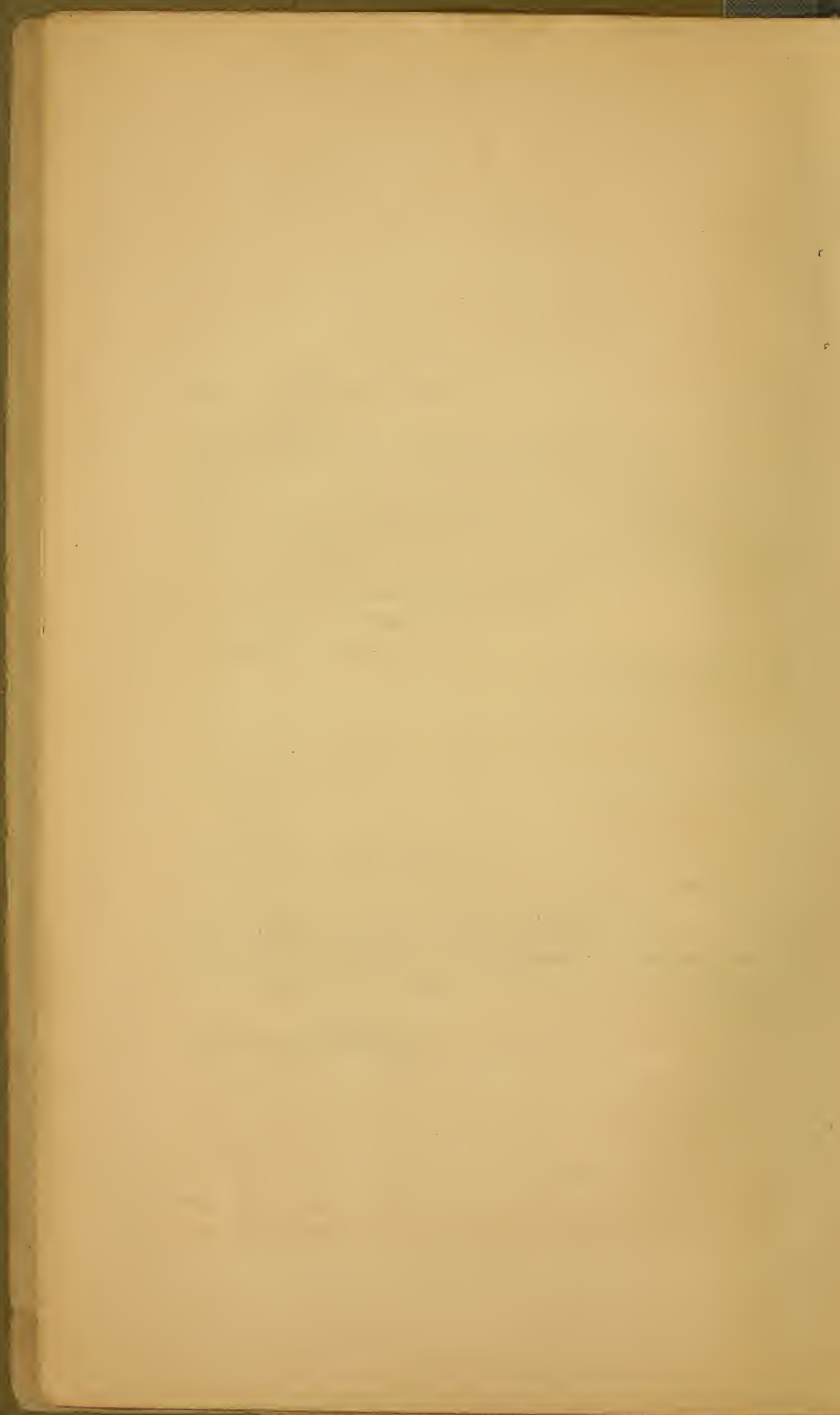
SOUTH ABINGTON, Aug. 1st, 1859.

GENTLEMEN, —

In answering your request of July 19th, I must, at least, be allowed to say, that the discourse to which you refer was prepared without the remotest thought of its publication. But I should do wrong to resist the unanimous expression of so many of my esteemed fellow citizens, of different denominations.

Sincerely Yours,

HENRY L. EDWARDS.





## DISCOURSE.

---

PROVERBS, XXII: VI. — Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

THE first part of this proverb contains counsel; the second, the reason for complying. First, the duty; secondly, the inducement. Educate the young aright, and thou shalt be recompensed in their riper years. Even when they are old and gray, they will be true to their early training. "They will not depart," says the inspired writer, and pens that are uninspired, have repeated the plain truth, till the expression is threadbare. The well known couplet of Pope, for example, —

" 'Tis education forms the common mind;  
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."

"For character groweth day by day," says another,  
"And the bent unto good or evil may be given in infancy.  
Scratch the green rind of a sapling, or wantonly twist it in the soil,  
The scarred and crooked oak will tell of thee for centuries to come.  
Even so mayst thou guide the mind to good;  
For disposition is builded up by the fashioning of first impressions:  
The habit of obedience and 'trust may be grafted in the cradle.  
Hold the little hands in prayer; teach the weak knees their kneeling;  
Let it see thee speaking to thy God:  
The touching recollection of thy prayers shall arrest the strong man in his sin.'

Be sure it is often otherwise. You have seen individuals traitorous to early influences; despising the prudence and piety of parents and preceptors; reversing the order of nature, and madly retreating toward perdition — "their last state worse than the first." But this is not the rule. The great majority remain as they commence; continue as they are taught; and so natural is this result

so common, and so much anticipated, it excites no remark; while occasional exceptions to the rule are notable, or notorious, just because they are against nature, and not according to expectation. If a young man shuns the paths and pitfalls of a vicious parentage, and redeems the reputation of a dishonored name, we dwell upon it as a distinguished and creditable achievement: or, if it be a virtuous example and virtuous precepts which the young man disregards, and a fair family escutcheon which the young man defiles, the same is true. We notice him, we talk about him, we remember him. It is not what we had a right to look for. It is a perversion; it is a falsification; it is an exception to the law of nature, which generally perpetuates its own impress, whether in the material or spiritual world, from age to age. The rule remains — exceptions only confirm it. Yes, how many pursue persistently, for weal or woe, the path that is laid out for them by progenitors or instructors. The influence is very strong — it almost always prevails. It acts as a *charm*, and but now and then one escapes the potent spell. The multitude are drawn upward, from their childhood, or lured downward, by the agency of others; so true it is, that

“Character is mainly moulded by the cast of minds that surround it;

And that which immemorial use hath sanctified, seemeth to be right and true.”

Now this is the point of the proverb. Here appears its importance. There must be virtuous influences from the outset. The youth must be started right; even infancy must; and this because one does not easily alter the course which he has commenced. Habit sets in stronger and stronger. He soon acquires a *momentum*, and moves on, as a general rule, right or wrong. This is all the proverb implies. No proverb is invariably exemplified, but generally. It would hardly be a proverb, if it proved true in every case; for, what is a proverb? It is a wise saying. But there is no special wisdom in stating what every one sees to be always and uniformly true. No; these proverbs are *generalizations*, and there will be exceptions, and you are in danger of being deceived. Be not deceived. Character will commonly continue as it is initiated. You can act upon this understanding. You can depend upon it as a rule. “Train up” those that are committed to your care, with the expectation that they will abide by what they are taught, and “not depart.”

It seems quite unnecessary now to remark, that the subject of this inspired proverb, is Human Education ; which I shall further discuss ; for education is the handmaid of religion. Nay ; in its highest reach, it is religion itself ; the soul being educated, conducted, onward and upward, to the throne of God.

I. Accordingly, let us inquire, in what education consists. If we mistake not, the very terms of the text will help to define it ; which reads, most literally ; “ Train up a child *according to his way* ; ” according to the *constitution of his being*, in other words. This is “ the way he should go,” as the English has it. “ He should go ” as he was made to go. He should be trained according to the constituents of his nature. He should be educated in view of the capacities with which he is endowed. These should be developed. This will be his education ; not so much the ingathering of knowledge, therefore, as the unfolding of his faculties ; the expansion of hereditary powers ; the enlargement of germs, which are inborn and innate. Educating, therefore, requires a true understanding of *humankind*. You must know what you have to deal with. You must be acquainted with the qualities of the soil which you cultivate, else you act at great disadvantage. And you must take into account the whole being ; not certain capabilities merely. Man is an aggregation of individual endowments. He is matter and mind. He is soul and substance. He has physical faculties to be developed ; intellectual faculties ; moral and religious faculties. Altogether, these constitute the man. He is the *resultant* of so many several principles. Subtract any part and he would not belong to the human *genus*. Educate one part and not another, the product will be as imperfect as your philosophy is false. You misapprehend man. Suppose a child should be nourished, and cherished, and cared for, simply as an *intellectual* being ; having indeed an infantine intellect, but its physical wants, its natural appetites, its instinctive weaknesses and liabilities, all forgotten. Its parents or protectors put a plenty of mental pabulum in reach, but forget its need of food, and warmth, and sleep. What is the consequence ? Why ; in a few days the child is dead ; and nobody wonders. The child was not treated according to its constitution. Its nature was not understood ; it starved. How rare are such mistakes — indeed unknown ; but how numerous

are analagous mistakes ; for there are spiritual appetites, as craving and imperious as those of the flesh. The soul must be fed ; the moral nature must be nourished ; the immortal mind must be ministered unto. Only a little while after the individual has set out in life, these ethereal, incorporeal appetites appear. They cry for sympathy ; they call for truth ; they require trust. Think how early these elements of an immortal existence are disclosed. Reason, affection, faith, how soon they are to be seen. Can they be prudently neglected ? Can a true education exclude any of these grand constituencies of the soul ? Nay ; but these immaterial faculties shall be vital and immortal, when the frail tenements of clay that contain them, shall have crumbled to dust. Is that, then, to be called education, which overlooks the permanent, and spends itself upon the perishable ; neglects that which allies us to God, and concerns itself wholly with man's mortal relationships ? Why no ; because you are to educate what there is to be educated ; to develop what there is to be developed. If there is a body to be enlarged, it must not be overlooked. If there is a soul to be instructed, you must seek for that result. On the one hand, the rudiments of physical health and strength must be guarded and cultivated ; on the other, the seeds of mental and moral capacity must be watched over as much at least, and made to grow. Whatever there is inherent, must be called out. This is the principle : " Train up a child " according to his constitution. If he was made to be muscular, let him be trained with that intent ; if he was made to think, and resolve, and be moved with emotion, let him be dealt with as such a being ; if he was made to believe, and love, and obey God, let him be educated with this understanding. If his constitution does not show in what his education should consist, I see not how we can tell at all. We argue that man is created *carniverous*, because he is furnished with incisor-teeth, for cutting and tearing flesh, and organs to digest it. It is the argument of design. And so, if he has the faculties of motion, and thought, and feeling, and faith, we reasonably infer that it was meant he should move, and think, and be in the exercise of sensibility and trust ; and that the full development of these capacities will *constitute* his education. This seems like sound logic. It seems rather like plain common sense ; too plain to bear expression ; and espe-

cially as the *material* is provided, to supply these capacities, as flesh is furnished for food, in the illustration; and such is certainly the fact. We have not one power which is not supplied. We have not a faculty, physical or immaterial, which does not find its own field of action and fulfillment, fitted to its use. Our corporeal powers have the whole globe for their theatre. Our intellectual energies may range over the universe of truth. Society evokes the susceptibilities of our moral nature; while God, and the great realities of faith, invite attention from every religious liability of the soul. The full unfolding of the powers upon their appropriate objects, must then answer to the idea of human education, and this is what the "wise man" means, in the recommendation of the text. Do this and the child will be trained in the "way he should go." The intentions of his being will be realized.

And how shall this training be accomplished? By exercise. Development implies exercise. It is this that calls forth the slumbering energies. The intellect must act, if you would know its capacity. The heart must be moved, if you would test its power; just as these nerves, and bones, and limbs of the body must be exerted, in order to the development of their strength. And the faculty of religious faith, which finds God, and confides in God, is no exception. It must be exercised. The *faculty* must be educated, exerted. That is to say, it must respond, and repeatedly respond, to the voice of God, in the soul, and in his Word. Otherwise, this part of us will remain forever a grand deficit. It will fail of its great end.

And what *are* the ends of human education. Why *should* the individual be developed? Let the attributes of his own being answer. It is already answered. He possesses imperishable endowments. He is made for immortality. He should then be *trained* for immortality. His education, from first to last, should have this lofty end in view. Any theory which rejects this idea, will be fundamentally at fault. His relations to this world are not to be overlooked, of course. They are not likely to be. The greater includes the less. Indeed, you cannot educate an individual for a higher sphere, without educating him for that which precedes. We may, however, have a narrow understanding of human nature and human destiny, and not once think that the education of such a being as

ours, is its development for all ages and eons. This is a very common error, and very pernicious; for the present life is of too much consequence — we cannot afford to pass through it without laying up in store for the next. To “train up a child,” therefore, “in the way he should go,” is to treat the same as having a dying body, but an undying soul; and beside, as being related both to finite and infinite intelligences; not as though one were isolated in universal space, the only being in existence. Education would then be a very different idea. Now, it must be shaped with reference to our wide-spread relationships. Our own welfare is but one end of our development; for we are related to society; and we are to be educated in view of this second and sublimer end. We are also related to God; and this transcendent fact holds out the *sublimest* end of all education.

It has been remarked, that a word of beautiful significance, which is found in one of the first records on the subject of public education ever made on this continent, has now fallen wholly out of use. On the 13th of April, 1635, Mr. Philemon Purmont, of Boston, was “entreated to become a schoolmaster for the nourtering of children;” and it is supposed that this obsolete word, implied a disposition, on the part of the teacher, to cultivate in the mind of the scholar, all kindly sympathies toward men, all elevated thoughts respecting the duties and destiny of life, and a supreme reverence for the character and attributes of the Creator.

We have not chosen, in this discourse, to make any special account of the fact that man is a sinner, and therefore needs discipline, as such; but only that he is a *creature* of God. We have considered education, as the normal developement of man’s nature; that which he would need if he were not a sinner; as being accomplished, moreover, by the exercise of his powers in their appropriate sphere; in full recollection of the fact that he is firmly allied to Jehovah, and an unending future.

II. Let us dwell upon a few reflections that flow from the subject.

I. We shall not fail to observe, for one thing, that the cause of education is one of great magnitude. It covers a broad territory. It commences early, and its effects are forever. It has to do with the whole nature of man, with every faculty of his being. It is concerned with all he is to be and to do, as he moves onward in a bound-

less existence. It determines his experience in the present world ; it tells of the influence he shall exert, fortunately or unfortunately, upon the character and condition of the human race ; and then it decides his eternal destiny. What length and breadth, what depth and height. Vast in its bearings upon a single soul, but immeasurably magnified as it reaches forth to every intelligent creature, and embraces a world in its wide results. Surely we contemplate no trivial theme, we pray for no common cause, we act for no ordinary ends, when we ask the favor of Heaven upon our youth and the rising race ; when we devise the best things, and put forth our earnest efforts to promote their improvement. God is interested in the great issue. A world-wide commonwealth of fellow beings has an interest at stake ; for there is no part of humanity which may not be reached in time, and reformed. Let us then rise to a right estimate of this subject ; remember wherein the education of an immortal being consists, and the vital consequences that follow.

II. We are led to reflect, furthermore, on the instrumentality which the Puritans, and the Pilgrims, and our enlightened forefathers of a later date, have put forth for the advancement of this great cause. We find the first record on this subject, in the town of Boston, in 1634. Eighteen years afterwards, the General Court enacted that every child should be educated ; and five years later, the support of schools was made compulsory. This is a single fact. But *why* did our fathers feel an interest in education ? Partly because they understood it ; because they had broad views of its significance ; because they saw how it was linked in with religion, and was intimately related to man's highest and holiest capabilities. " Religion, Education, and Freedom," have well been termed " their triple motto." It is not strange, therefore, that those men of immortal memory, who migrated to these shores, should have made it their first business to build sanctuaries and school houses for God and posterity. It was carrying out their profound convictions of human duty and human destiny. It was, in substance, what their predecessors had nobly undertaken to demonstrate, in their Genevan-exile, amid the liberty-loving mountains of Switzerland. It was what such men achieved, substantially, in establishing the Independence of Scotland, and the Puritan Commonwealth of England. It was what such

men demonstrated, at length, in this new world, and is a demonstration still, with all its drawbacks: for, not till the sun be blotted from the sky, — nay; not till Deity be dethroned, shall *true* Religion and Education, or even Liberty, be divorced. These mighty agencies have always gone together, when in truth they have progressed at all, joined as with hooks of steel. They will not flourish separately, but perish, as for any effect. So our fathers and earlier generations believed; so they acted. They did not shut up religion, by itself, in the sanctuary; nor learning in the academy; nor liberty in the legislature; but the cherished three were made to interpenetrate each other, and exert their effects everywhere. The meeting house was the place of highest education; the school house was open to religion; while both were sacred to the cause of freedom, and the rights of conscience. They looked upon God as the centre of all truth, and religion as the top-stone of human perfectibility.

What means, then, what we hear? for we have heard just the opposite insinuated, recently; and heard it argued that religious instruction should be more completely banished from the school room, because that was not “the purpose for which our schools were established.” *Established!* *When were* our schools established? Long generations before we were born. *Argued!* With all due respect, we must say that it argues rather ignorance of our ancestral history. We have not so learned the early New-England character and conduct. Nothing is further from the fact. As far back as 1642, the General Court required that “*religious* instruction should be given to all children;” and the statute has been renewed, in some form, from that day to this. These men never removed God, or God’s truth, from their halls of education; but, on the contrary, he who saw most of God, in history, or geometry, or geography, met, most completely, their ideal of a guide and instructor of youth — a “nourterer of children.” Such was Mr. Philemon Purmont. Were our fathers afraid that religious truth would be too much taught to the young? No! Did they feel the need of special legislation to restrict it? Never! And was there ever any danger? Not at all. You never knew a child injured, in school, with an excess of religious knowledge; nor have you known a teacher who ran into excesses on this subject. Human nature is not apt to err in this direction.



“But it does,” it is said; “our teachers take the opportunity to teach sectarianism.” It is a mere bugbear. They *do*? *Who* do? Who *are* they? What are their *names*? Where are the *facts*? I believe it is libellous. “But they will, if they do not now.” Who is alarmed? Real religion is not, I think. It is not generally. It is *pseudo*-religion, or none at all, that is terrified at sectarianism. “But what if these schools should all be taught at length by heterodox instructors. Would you be willing that such persons should pray in the presence of your children?” Most certainly. Let them pray by all means. Woe betide us, indeed, when teachers shall be selected because of their heterodoxy, or, what is worse, infidelity. Our schools would deteriorate with a fearful rapidity. Yet far be it from us, far be it from future generations, to insist that Calvinism, or Methodism, or Baptism, or any *ism*, should be made a test. “But it takes so much time.” How much? “Well — too much; five minutes, in case of extemporaneous prayer; and sometimes a teacher overruns this, and spends six or seven minutes.” Indeed; and did a teacher ever happen to overrun his time in Latin, and rob arithmetic as much? and so you turned the Latin out-doors, and would not have it taught at all; or, only some six sentences, and the same every day? Is this logic? It seems like the sheerest subterfuge. Imagine such arguments in the mouth of Bradford, Brewster, Carver, John Winthrop, Edward Winslow — those pious, profound, patriotic Pilgrims. Alas for the degeneracy of our day. Never was there a more unnecessary and impertinent invasion of public sentiment and the public peace, in respect to a time-honored usage, while none, or next to none, were clamorous against it. There are those who fear, or seem to fear, lest religion shall get out of its place, and occupy some area that does not belong to it. Men of other days deemed religion always in place, and possessed of a *preemption-claim* to every inch of human territory. When will the superficial infidelity of these times, return to a profounder faith, to a profounder intelligence, too.

“The happiness and good-order of a people,” says the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights, which originated in the wisdom of a wiser age, “essentially depends upon piety, religion, and morality.

It is the duty and the right of all men in society publicly to worship the Supreme Being, the great Preserver of the universe. No person shall be restrained in his liberty, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience." Has this declaration been read, and remembered, of late? Have the rights of conscience been respected? Have the rights of reason and religion been profoundly recognized?

III. The subject leads us to remark, once more, that a right view of human education justifies the legal statutes, that we now find, in favor of religion in our school-systems. "It shall be the duty of the School Committee to require the daily reading of some portion of the Bible, in the common English version." And again; "It shall be the duty of professors of colleges, teachers in academies, and all other instructors of youth, to exert their *best endeavors* to impress on the minds of their pupils, the principles of piety, temperance, sobriety, etc., those virtues which are the ornament of society; and it shall be the duty of these instructors to lead their pupils, as their ages will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of these virtues, to preserve a republican constitution, secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness." And "it shall be the duty of ministers of the gospel, and others, to exert their influence in the several towns, that the youth shall regularly attend; for," as it is in the preamble of our Constitution, "the encouragement of these things tends to the honor of God and the *advancement of the Christian religion.*"

Now, these are interesting enactments, and we know why they stand recorded. Our wisest statesmen and law-givers have perceived that the whole being of man should be educated; that his religious capacities, and all his capacities, should be disciplined, and supplied with their proper nutriment. They have seen that religion and education go hand in hand, and that the welfare of society demands that piety be inculcated as a prime virtue; that it be put *first*, and impressed upon the opening intellect and affections of the young. Our legislators have clearly understood, that all education should be religiously conducted, in order to the morality and prosperity, the peace and happiness, and all the interests of a community; inasmuch as history has taught them, as it has taught every observer, that vice,

and disease, and poverty, and wretchedness always increase, in proportion as ignorance and irreligion abound. It is thus that the vital relationship of church and state, so far as reciprocal influence is concerned, is distinctly recognized in the organic *status* of the republic. The law does not allow that the meeting house and school house are antagonistic agencies, but fitted to act together, for the education and elevation of man's immortal nature.

But this law is opposed. The Bible is objected to. "Cast it out," says the papist, the infidel, and the radical, "for there is a large sprinkling of Irish Catholic children in our schools, and their parents do not approve of our protestant version; and there may yet be children of Jewish parents, who deny the New Testament; and Chinese, who deny both the New and the Old. Then there are different denominations, and some deny certain parts of Scripture, and no two perfectly agree in its interpretation, and some of us do not believe in the Bible at all. What! are you going to confine us all to this book as a common creed?" Yes, says the profoundest statesmanship, for there is but one book that intelligent men can believe to be the Inspired Word of God; and the education of the human mind cannot be carried on and perfected without this unparalleled volume. We cannot leave out this sacred classic, this highest of human literature, in the development of the individual man. But we bind no man's belief—we lord it over no man's conscience—we do not compel the children to believe what their instructors tell them—we cannot; not even in arithmetic, or any of the rudiments. This is a land of free, independent opinions. Parents may contradict, if they choose, all that the teacher has taught—unteach it, if they desire; and the parent must have small influence over his child, who cannot, if he please, at least in the matter of moral and religious convictions, counteract, essentially, all it has learned at school. If most do not, it is because they do not wish to. Read the Bible, from beginning to end, to your children at home, says American Law and Liberty, and show them, as you profess to know, by your elaborate commentary on each text, by the intrinsic inferiority of its truth, by the light of its history, and its pernicious effects on society, that the Bible is a false record, and unworthy of their confidence. We do not say this would be well for you, or wise. But you have the right.

Your children are your own, says the law, and we cannot stand between them and you. But as long as the Bible *appears* to be the word of God, and America rules America; as long as religion recommends itself to the human mind, and its influence *seems* so salutary, "shall it be the duty of the Committee to require the daily reading of some portion of the Bible, in the common English version. And beside, it shall be the duty of all instructors of youth to use their *best endeavors* to impress on the minds of their pupils, the principles of piety; and lead them, as their ages will admit, into a clear understanding of its tendency to promote their future happiness."

But this law is opposed. It is even repudiated. Teachers shall not "exert their *best endeavors* to impress piety on the minds of children and youth." They shall not "endeavor to lead their pupils into a *clear* understanding of piety." They shall not say anything about it. They shall not utter a word of explanation or enforcement. Above all, they shall not presume to pray, — anything but this, in the presence of the children, and Almighty God — the God of nature, and the God of the Bible. What, now, is this opposition, but *nullification* of Massachusetts law; for how can a teacher "*exert his best endeavors to impress the principles of piety upon his pupils,*" if he may not, in faith, and humility, and thanksgiving, and without restraint, recognize God, the Giver of all good — the Being in whom he, and those confided to his care, have lived, from "dawn till dewy eve," from night again till morn; or, if prayer must be protruded,\* which is the same thing in effect, beyond the limits of school hours, and be left to labor under the reproach of being an inferior and unnecessary accomplishment. No teacher can use "*his best endeavors,*" as the law directs, under such an incumbrance — such an *incubus*. It is in vain for him to attempt to "lead his pupils into a *clear understanding* of piety," if he may not lead them, in prayer, to the Source of all piety, and the Author of all truth.

"But the teacher is not forbidden to pray. He may offer the

---

\* "Should Teachers think it their duty to introduce other (religious) exercises, before or after school hours, with the consent of the school, the Committee claim no right, and have no desire, to throw any obstacles in the way of so doing."

Lord's Prayer.\* Is anything better?" To this we reply, that the constant repetition of this formula is not prayer. "Vain repetition" was particularly prohibited. It was heathenish. Incessant repetition renders any truth vain, powerless that is, as everybody knows. Adhering literally to this phraseology, varying never from this monotonous litany, who listens to you, at length? who is impressed? who is awake? and the children are asleep first, as a matter of course. Children are soon listless to liturgies and formularies; sooner than adults. They may be taught to recite them, like parrots, and with great advantage, especially *young* children. But it is impossible for an instructor to "exert his *best endeavors*, to impress piety" upon minds at all advanced, if he is tied up to a form; and this is well understood by every one.

And then, where shall we learn the Lord's Prayer? Shall we learn it in Luke, or Matthew? They do not record it alike. Surely they would, if it was to be endlessly repeated. At least, John would have reproduced the genuine. What is to be done? Will not this difference, in different schools, be dangerous? What shall be done? Must not the Committee make out a *Harmony* of the two Evangelists? Are they sensible of the function they have assumed?

Moreover, the disciples were not instructed to use these *words*; nor is there any proof that either Christ, or his disciples, ever did employ precisely this form, though they often prayed, using other expressions, and these intermingled. But they were always to pray "in this *manner*." "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." "When ye pray, say," *in substance*, "Our Father, which art in heaven," etc. This was the meaning of the command. It was to be a model of devotion, not a liturgy; a model, not a mummery; a pattern for us, not a paternoster. We do not use models in machinery much, but what is made from the model. As for this perfect prayer, we are to copy it, in its spirit, in its simplicity, in its comprehensiveness, into all our petitions. It is to be expanded. It is the whole of Christian-

---

\* "ABINGTON, May 30, 1859.

*To the Teachers in the Schools of Abington.*

At a meeting of the School Board, held this day, the following vote was passed: That the reading of the Scriptures, and the use of the Lord's Prayer, are the only religious exercises required or permitted in our public schools, during school hours."

ity, in the smallest compass. It is the condensation of all the great facts pertaining to the Kingdom of God in Christ. Let it enlarge, like leaven, in the soul. Like the rising light, let it increase and pervade the entire sphere of christian doctrine. Such is the philosophy of the Lord's Prayer; such its signification. Who would have thought it was to be sent forth, in the nineteenth century, like a Papal Bull from the chair of St. Peter, to bind the liberty of speech and thought. Truly we have returned to the days of dogmatism.

And why is not the Bible forbidden? One cannot read it, and believe it, without believing in prayer as much. Its purport is the same as prayer; it is the root and reservoir of prayer. It may be made the organ of sectarian instruction, as well as prayer. There cannot be such a difference between reading a chapter, and repeating it. These teachers, that cannot be trusted, can collect passages, as potent, and *sectarian*, if you please to term it so, as their own precatory expressions would be. Is it safe? Should not teachers be required to read in course? And what if they should chance to light upon the fifty-first Psalm; or, the prayer of the publican? Might they not translate those penitential paragraphs into the spirit and letter of their own petitions? Could this be tolerated? Only the Lord's Prayer is allowed. Is there any security, in fact, till the Bible is forbidden? "But it is a good reading-book. The Committee have no disposition to exclude it." Grant as much; I am glad to believe it. And beside, the law! that is explicit and peremptory. "The Bible *shall be read*." Not, however, as a reading-book, especially; that is not the design. It is not the best reading-book, that it should be read, day by day, year after year. There are hundreds better. But it "shall be read" as a religious book. Then why not permit any Bible prayer? Is it all worthy of being read, but only five verses fit to be uttered in supplication? Strange inconsistency; for the Bible is a great prayer-book. It is full of forms — inspired forms, such as these; viz.: "God be merciful to me;" "Create in me a clean heart; renew a right spirit within me;" "Cast me not away from thy presence; take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" "Lord, save, or I perish." Is there any objection to these prayers? It would certainly give a *greater* variety, and *help* the teacher, "in leading his pupils, to a *clear* understanding of piety," as the law requires. You never would dream of re-

stricting the teacher to one set of words, in chemistry, and history. It would be so absurd ; it would be so arbitrary ; it would be such an abuse of knowledge, and such a waste of language. For what was the rest of good old English made ? one well might ask. Shame, then, that there should be such a restriction in the utterance, and conveyance of *religious* truth.

And has it come to this ? Must the teacher be so unmanned ? Has he no discretion ? Must he be meddled with, and dictated to, in every detail of duty ? Shall he be so hampered, and led with leading strings ? Where is the constitutional authority for this ? Shall the very decree of the Commonwealth be broken, which ordains that "his liberty shall not be restrained ?" And shall the *truth* be bound ? Is this the boasted liberality, which we hear so much about ; or, is it bigotry, and a timid apprehension, lest the truth shall have "free course, and run, and be glorified ?" for the truth is, that prayer is a part of the education of a dependent being — a superior part ; and when prayer is discountenanced, and cast into contempt, education is undermined, cast down, and finally destroyed. This prohibition of prayer strikes, therefore, though unintentionally, at the very foundation of human interest. It is asking too much ; reason refuses. An enlightened Christian conscience, as well as a large and liberal intelligence, refuses to be silent. It will not contend, but retires from the field.\* It is the age of Protestantism. Principle is worth more than place. How honorable the sacrifice, when it is for conscience sake, for Christ's sake, and the sake of those for whom Christ died.

Now I say these things in love ; not in anger or enmity. I have spoken earnestly, as I must, but not unkindly. I have said nothing to the discredit of private character or citizenship. Let no man accuse me of personality. Principles, not persons. If any one *has* personal or political purposes to serve in this matter, I have none of it. We are on the eve of no election ; and, for one, I care not who administer our public affairs, so be that they are administered wisely, and with God in view. But as long as I stand in this place, I shall

---

\* Several teachers in town have resigned their situations, in consequence of this regulation.

fearlessly make application of religious truth, when necessary, to whatever, and whomsoever, it may affect.

And I shall not close at this time, without adverting to the magnitude of the trust, which we commit to teachers, and guardians of youth. Theirs is no ordinary, or every-day undertaking. It is second to none — the tuition of rational, immortal, accountable being. It interests me in the man I meet, man or woman, to know that they have thus the interests of the rising generation in charge. You seem to see scores, or even hundreds, of human beings comprehended in one. And they have not only a great task to fulfill, teachers and officers, but numerous and peculiar trials, to struggle against. They are beset on all sides, by young and old. Children look at facts with a one-sided view, and the rest of us are but children of a larger growth, while many among us are forward to find fault. Now these teachers and guardians are on the ground; they are in the field; they must generally know best, I admit. I would be slow to take exception to what they have determined. I would only open my lips in condemnation, when they have done that which is manifestly unjust and indefensible; or, when they have adopted measures in palpable opposition to the will and word of God. They need our co-operation. Let us co-operate whenever we can, consistently with the truth. Let them share largely in our sympathies, and be abundantly remembered in our prayers, that they may all be guided by the good hand of God, in training up the children and youth of this town, for usefulness, and honor, and immortality.



